

# The basics of debating

A debate is a formal competition between two teams, usually with three members each, arguing a discussion statement known as "**the moot**".

The moot is worded as an affirmative statement, beginning with the word "That". It is chosen because it can be argued from two points of view, **the Affirmative** and **the Negative**.

Examples of moots are:

That the car is a curse.

That bicycles should be registered and their riders licensed.

That the five-day school week is too long.

That keeping pets in private homes should be made illegal.

For the first of these examples:

The Affirmative team would argue "That the car is a curse."

The Negative team would argue "That the car is --not a curse."

To make debating interesting for both the debaters and the audience, moots are usually chosen for their light-hearted tone and humorous possibilities.

There are certain rules for the role of each speaker and each team (Affirmative and Negative) tries to convince the audience that their line of argument is the most persuasive. **The Adjudicator** (the judge) is the person who decides which team wins the debate.

Winning the debate is decided on the basis of technical rules (to do with both argument and presentation), which must be followed by the debaters to give them the edge over their opponents. The Adjudicator judges the debate on both the soundness of the team's argument and on the way the members of the team have worked together to present their case.

Debating is therefore not just having an argument. It involves research, preparation, teamwork, speaking skills, and the ability to persuade.

The usual practice in debating is for the teams to be given the topic and told whether they are Affirmative or Negative (depending on the toss of a coin). They then go away and prepare their speeches ready for presentation.

Debating is a fun activity, providing practice in both public speaking and in presenting a sound argument. You may have to debate an idea (the moot) that you do not agree with at all. This is what debating is all about.

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